

algebra of file naming system


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The "algebra" of a file naming system treats a filename as a structured equation: an ordered sequence of discrete metadata components (C_i) joined by specific delimiters (D). By arranging tokens from most to least significant, you create a predictable, machine- and human-readable string. Harvard University +2

$$\text{Filename} = C_1 D C_2 D C_3 \dots \text{ext}$$

You can learn more about general core structures through guides like the [Harvard Data Management File Naming Conventions](#).

Core Components and Operators

- **Components (C_i):** Independent metadata tokens such as date, project ID, creator, and version.
- **Macro-Delimiter (D):** A character used to separate distinct components. Standard operators are the hyphen (-) or underscore (_).
- **Micro-Delimiter:** Internal casing rules (like `camelCase`) used within a single component if it contains multiple words.
- **The Terminal Operator (.):** A strict separator used exclusively before the file extension. Never use interior periods. Harvard University +4

Rules for Constructing the Equation

- **Positional Significance:** Place the most globally unique or frequently sorted criteria on the far left (e.g., date or project code).
- **Zero-Padding:** Use leading zeros for numerical indexes (e.g., `001` instead of `1`) to preserve proper lexical and numerical sorting order.
- **Standardized Dates:** Enforce an ISO-compliant chronological format like `YYYYMMDD` .

- **Character Restrictions:** Restrict the alphabet to safe ASCII characters: Latin letters (A-Z , a-z), numbers (0-9), hyphens, and underscores. 🏛️ Harvard University +3

Syntax Example

$$\underbrace{20260606}_{C_1: \text{Date}} \underbrace{\text{PROJ01}}_{C_2: \text{Project}} \underbrace{\text{report}}_{C_3: \text{Description}} - \underbrace{\text{v01}}_{C_4: \text{Version}} .\text{pdf}_{\text{Ext}}$$

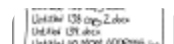
- **Result:** 20260606_PROJ01_report-v01.pdf 🏛️ NNLM (.gov) +1



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File Naming Conventions | Data Management



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Harvard University

<https://datamanagement.hms.harvard.edu> › plan-design

File Naming Conventions

A file naming convention is **a framework for naming your files** in a way that describes what they contain and how they relate to other files. [Read more](#)

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FILE NAMING FORMULA CHEAT SHEET PDF

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The University of Melbourne

<https://oer-file-management-101-digitalstewardship-c3286cf143c61ad26727.pages.gitlab.unimelb.edu.au> › ...

File Naming - File Management 101

A logical and well thought through **file naming convention** enables others (and yourself) to easily locate files. [Read more](#)

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File Naming | Research Data Management

File names should be machine-readable: use alphanumeric characters with snake or camel case, and don't have spaces or special characters. File

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 Haverford College
https://www.haverford.edu › files › Office › Library

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